



92...going on 18!

George Burns just keeps getting younger

ALTHOUGH he's 92 and going stronger than ever, George Burns — who is starring in yet another movie — admits he doesn't wake up every morning, light a cigar and wish he was 18 again.

But the title of his latest movie just happens to be that -- 18 Again. George, in the shape of his young co-star Charlie Schlatter, gets the chance to rediscover his youth ... and sing the movie's title song.

"I was old when I was 18," says George, taking a breather during a one-night stand at California's landmark Hotel Del Coronado, which actually is one of the few places older than the ageless entertainer.

"I couldn't get a job at that age. I did all kinds of acts from age eight to 27, which is when I met Gracie (his late wife, Gracie Allen). Then I started to play some good bits.

"When I was 18 I started singing

with three other kids," recalls George, as though he were talking about yesterday. "We called ourselves the Peewee Quartet. I fell in love with showbusiness then, and I love it as much today."

Today everyone loves Burns. In the past 25 years he's been rediscovered by audiences of all ages, has won an Oscar (The Sunshine Boys), played God on screen, written best-selling books, performed to sell-out crowds at nightclubs around the world and in his spare time is penning his memoirs of life with Gracie. He's booked to play the London Palladium soon after January, 1996 — his 100th birthday.

His new film is based loosely on his hit song. George plays an 81-year-old businessman who wakes up after a car crash in the body of his 18-year-old grandson, played by Schlatter.

"Working with George is a dream come true for me," says

ABOVE: George Burns with his 18 Again co-star, Charlie Schlatter ... "I'll do anything to stay in showbusiness."

Schlatter. "George is great to work with. When I finally got the part I was sitting in his office. I saw a puff of cigar smoke and suddenly he walks in holding a coffee mug which had 'God' on it. I almost lost control being in the room with such a legend."

With 18 Again, George goes into the record books as the oldest film star to portray a teenager. In the picture he plays an old man who blows out the candles on his 81st birthday cake and makes a prophetic wish: To enjoy the same energy, excitement and physical prowess as his beloved 18-year-old grandson.

Schlatter goes around setting his unhappy life right via the inner-wisdom of his elder ... with George's voice delivering perfect one-liners.

Sipping a martini, George explains: "I trade bodies with my 18-year-old grandson. It's not a fair exchange, but you know me ... I'll do anything to stay in showbusiness."

From Ivor Davis in Los Angeles